


Chapter 6


Sustainable Tourism: How Is This Issue Effectively Approached?

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ABSTRACT

This work intends to verify if there is academic research that proposes innovative strategies for sustainable tourism. It analyses 70 valid documents including theses, dissertations, scientific papers, and reports. Main objectives to explore are which themes stand out most; the difference between academic production in Portugal and Brazil; and how the topics of sustainability, environment, governance, planning, and regulation relate to tourism. A software for qualitative analysis is used to enrich the discussion around sustainable tourism discerning preferential governance strategies. Few works use sustainability indexes, and, if used, most of them are descriptive. For real sustainable tourism, its governance has to be based on appropriate indicators. Measures can empower destinations, providing the information needed to decide accurately and creatively. A challenge for the Portuguese academy on tourism and hospitality is to have an ongoing role in implementing key indicators and in their validation and monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is defined as the creation and promotion of a tourism industry that preserves or enhances a country's social, cultural or environmental capital. Data reveals that the environmental strength of a country is directly related to tourism revenue. Although there is no evidence of direct causality, the more pristine the natural environment of a local the more tourists are willing to access it. Consequently, as the natural capital deteriorates, destinations lose revenue. It is important to recognize that processes

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and activities associated with tourism also damage the environment. Given the close relationship between natural resources and a very large segment of the tourism industry, a lack of progress on fostering sustainability will reduce tourism development opportunities. Besides environment, also cultural and socio-economic issues become involved in this equation of tourism sustainability. Many works and reports discuss this subject, revealing its increasing importance for today's global and local decisions about tourism development. Even the communication of sustainability of a destination influences the intention to visit it, as Melo and Farias (2018) acknowledged.

This work aims to establish what proportion of academic works, listed in the scientific repository of open access in Portugal (RCAAP), have proposed innovative governance strategies for sustainable tourism. And among these, which portion has used approaches grounded on international/national sustainability indexes. RCAAP was used as it promotes visibility, access and diffusion of the results of academic production and scientific research in Portugal and Brazil. Academic production on sustainable tourism not always refers to international indexes (such as the Travel & Tourism Environmental Sustainability Index and the Global Destination Sustainability Index). This might be due to different factors such as lack of funding, complexity of data collection and lack of statistical training in tourism schools. This analysis initially looked at 164 theses and other scientific works containing the required keywords: sustainable tourism, sustainability index, and governance. However, the final selection retained 70 stable documents which were well downloadable and according to the criteria considered.

Some Statistics

In 2017 the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that travel and tourism contributed 10% of the world's GDP and accounted for just under 10% of its total employment. However, data from 2013 show that the contribution from tourism sector to global climate change was approximately 5% of carbon emissions (Gossling et al., 2013). A few national tourism economies can be considerably more carbon-intense than others, thus supporting the need to monitor their growth and sustainability in the coming years. According to the environmental footprint of nations, Portugal with a population of 10,291,027 (INE, 2011) was one of the countries that made a difference in setting a goal of achieving carbon neutrality in 2050. Electricity and transport are factors that account for this issue. The carbon footprint is now under the European average (of 8,7 tons CO₂ emissions per capita).

Brazil, with a population of 208,862,818 (IBGE, 2017) has experienced success in slowing rain forest destruction, which has resulted in vast reductions of carbon emissions (Howard, 2014). The case of Brazil shows that it is possible to promote sustainability while still growing the economy.

The main objective of this work is to investigate in what ways academic works (especially doctoral theses, papers and reports) in Portugal and Brazil reacted to the projections on the growing pressure that tourism may be placing on the environment and society. Is the application of sustainability indexes an important concern in those academic works? And do they give practical recommendations from their appliance?

Thus, the overall research objective of present work is to analyze the academic production on sustainable tourism produced in Portuguese and Brazilian higher education institutions from 2004 to 2017. Key aspects to be analyzed are: 1) what contents are more salient; 2) what differences exist between academic production in Brazil and Portugal; and 3) how topics such as sustainability, environment, governance, planning and regulation relate to tourism sustainability and its indicators. Through these aspects this research intends to analyze: sustainable tourism indexes; visions of progress and general values about the

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